



CLARION SCRAWL

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WHEN I was a teen, I subscribed to a now long defunct glossy magazine called *Intellectual Digest*. I never mentioned it to friends for, where I live - a farming community - few people took an interest in the life of the mind. Teens were supposed to be interested in sports, cars, girls, and videogames. It was a little guilty pleasure. I say this as an emblem of evidence that I am not, by inclination, anti-intellectual. I like them. I respect them. Yet, I do think there are things they should probably keep out of. One of those things is the subject of UFOs.

It's an empirical thing. Call it some branching corollary from Clark's First Law: "When a distinguished hi-brow intellectual deigns to write about UFOs, the result is usually an embarrassment." The evidence has accumulated gradually and I won't say it will convince everyone, but let me pull together some items from my files. In an essay, "We've All Studied Lifton," I showed that a paragraph written by Yale-man Robert J. Lifton suggesting abductions were a "mythic version of child abuse" was speculation based on hearsay.(1) Jung's book on the saucer myth has some historic value, but the distinctive idea that readers took away from it: UFO = mandala, is controverted by elementary logic. Fearful saucer encounters are inconsistent with a symbol that otherwise always manifests with tranquility and feelings of becoming whole.(2)

Philip Taylor has already noted that Oxford and Cambridge prolific philosopher Gerald Heard offered the idiosyncratic notion that super-bees from Mars piloted saucers.(3) Arthur Koestler offered a short appendix on UFOs in *Janus: A Summing Up* (1978) which has a couple of howlers like the word 'ufology' being coined in 1946 and ending on a line that makes Koestler sound like he respects the opinion of a UFO maven who hears cats talk.(4) (That this person - Aimé Michel - was being tongue-in-cheek is true enough, but many could hardly know this from the lack of explanatory context.) The bulk of his discussion re-tells the story of the Low memorandum and how the staff would try to trick

the public into thinking it is objective while making scientists think they were hard-nosed. But Koestler is writing nearly a decade after the Condon study was done and the issue was moot. The Low memo 'exposé' had no impact even at the time it first played.(5) Steve Allen, creator of the PBS "Meeting of Minds" series, digresses in the middle of a critique of religion to speak of the bizarre nature of flying saucer belief. But it stumbles on an elementary matter of chronology: "The first UFO was reportedly sighted in the early fifties."(6) I'm sure other examples will spring to mind.

What at last stimulated me to suggest this law is a new example that was recently brought to my attention. I had mentioned my admiration of Weston La Barre's *The Ghost Dance* to someone while expressing some disappointment that I could not think of any connection the book had to UFO study. He pointed out to me I had overlooked some lines La Barre made about Festinger's famous study *When Prophecy Fails*. I quickly pulled it off the shelf and confirmed that I had somehow passed over or forgot this material. I sort of wished I could have continued to miss it. It measures one paragraph and one footnote.

The paragraph in the main text summarizes Festinger fairly and urbanely. The main points are that Festinger's book confirms that religious proselytising increases in intensity when prophecy fails - "no doubt growing out of a naively democratic episte-

mology which holds that the more believers, the higher the truth value of the belief." Marian Keech got messages from outer space, specifically "Sanandra of the planet Clarion", predicting an end of the world flood. The saucer cavalry did not come for their rescue, despite their pious fasting and cutting of worldly ties. They sought out the press to get a larger clientele rather than hide in shame. La Barre adds, "the psychiatrist might make the relevant remarks on the characteristic impermeability of paranoia to cognitive feedback."(7) I would guess he regarded the prophetic cataclysm as reason enough to offer such a diagnosis. That the alien is misspelled twice as Sanandra - there's no r - is at worst a cosmetic gaffe.

It is the footnote that makes me groan: "The difficulty of locating Sanandra on Clarion is that this hitherto unreported planet must be beyond the orbit of the farthest one known, Pluto. To converse with Sanandra and get an answer back would take two times the light years that Clarion is distant from the earth for each response, which must make colloquy something of a bore. At this rate, Clarion could not be, as it sounds, a daily newspaper; still 'Clarion' has an odd clang with 'Marian' - but this leaves in some doubt the identity of Sanandra, though he or she evidently speaks good middle-western American English."(8)

The most blatant goof here is the effort to draw significance out the fact that Clarion rhymes with Marian. Seasoned ufologists all know that 'Marian Keech' was a pseudonym. The lady who channels Sananda actually went by the name of Dorothy Martin.(9) Festinger did not hide the fact that he had disguised the names of the people in the book.(10) Almost as bad, 'Clarion' was



Beware of Greys bearing gifts

Your Editor witnessed this amazing close encounter in the Princess Square shopping centre, Bracknell, Berkshire, in December 1999. Nobody else seemed to notice anything unusual. Could this have been due to the Oz Factor?

not even invented by 'Marian'. Some will recognize the name Clarion from the earlier Truman Bethurum contact. Bethurum alleged his contact occurred either 27 or 28 July, 1952 and spoke of it in newspaper articles as early as 25 September 1953. The book was selling as early as 1 April 1954.(11) D.M. starts talking about Clarion sometime in the spring of 1954 and Sananda, more specifically, is known to be first channelled in mid-April.(12)

It is not clear from Festinger's book that D.M. thought Clarion existed at interstellar distances. It is grouped with worlds like Venus and Uranus in some lines.(13) Bethurum indicated Clarion was "entirely invisible from earth, since it was on the other side of the moon".(14) By the time of the Condon report, some folks had relocated Clarion to the opposite side of the Sun.(15) This is reminiscent of the notion of counter-Earths found in many systems of myth. Ancient Greek astronomy offers a prominently known example.

This would likely be thought moot by new-agers on other principles. One, some communications explicitly involved beings on flying saucers and thus already close by. Two, these communications involve telepathy which, new age tenets allow, travels at the speed of imagination and that is not limited to c. Three, the beings also exist at a higher "vibratory frequency" and thus the whole world may exist at "a vibratory rate that the dense people of Earth cannot see them".(16) This is, after all, a belief system grown out of theosophy.(17)

La Barre's comment about the contacts involving good midwestern English strikes me as more expectant than observant. D.M. lived in New York before coming to the midwest and the locutions often owe much to the stylings and religious bafflegab of the culture of spiritualism. How midwestern does this message sound to you? -- "So shall ye be at the altar at the time of the evening when there is a tola directly over you."(18) I, a midwesterner, should probably be offended to think we talk channel-goo like the stuff on display in Festinger. La Barre's pointed humour is aimed in the wrong direction.

To show there are no hard feelings, let's try to answer that question La Barre couldn't quite figure out. Who is Sananda? I looked through a number of texts devoted to mythology and confirmed the name is evidently modern and has not been used before in any prominent ancient myths. Plugging the name into the Google search engine turned up an alarming 6670 items. Needless to say, I only skimmed through some of the more hopeful looking documents in the first 300 listed. It impressed me that the name has become quite popular among those who channel. This seems to be a way to put forward religious teachings and ascribe them to someone who, by D.M.'s precedent and subsequently theosophic tradition, both is and is not Jesus. Some put him in the category of

an Ascended Master and he is repeatedly found hanging around in the same circles as Ashtar. Some of the people involved with channelling Sananda include Linda Bardino, Janisel, Eric Klein, Karana Palmer, Sister Thedra, Paul Walsh-Roberts, Jeannie Weyrick, and Andrew Whalley, if you are interested in such things. Call it peculiar that this name who should be thought a false prophet has gained such a following.

The name seems plausibly Eastern and it concerns me that Dorothy Martin might have picked it up from prior theosophic works. It is in none of those I've consulted, but it is not a genre I have extensive knowledge about, so, no guarantees. I have two guesses.

One: It is derived from California's infamous San Andreas Fault. We know the initial newspaper account of her prophecy spoke of the Clarionites having "observed fault lines in the earth's crust that foretold the deluge". Her cataclysm "will submerge the West Coast from Seattle, Washington to Chile in South America."(19) Obviously, if Sananda appears earlier in theosophical literature and in a context that excludes the involvement of the West Coast, this idea is vulnerable to disproof.

Guess NumberTwo: It is derived from San-tana Dharma. This is a term that appears in the Bhagavid Gita referring to the eternal laws of family and seems to mean in Sanskrit 'eternal right,' truth, religion. Eastern thinkers are said to use it nowadays as a term for the religion of Hinduism.(20) The meaning seems especially suitable to form the footing of a theosophical malapropism. This clearly requires a bad bit of garble, but I've already indicated I don't find the charge that Clarionites speak good midwestern as credible. If Sananda appears before Dorothy Martin began channelling him, this may be the better notion. Naturally, this may also be subject to disproof if a memoir or confession turns up disclosing the line of reasoning.

Not being a theist, the presence of fallibility in one of my intellectual heroes does not exactly shake my faith in the nature of the world. The Ghost Dance remains a masterpiece, even if I am now sure it is not absolutely perfect in all things. I'll excuse him on the hypothesis that high-brows are obliged by natural law to get the UFO thing wrong and they are better on the subjects that really matter.

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EDITORIAL

In our previous issue Kevin McClure remarked that Georgina Bruni had confused him with someone called Bob Easton concerning early investigations of the Rendlesham affair. Bruni, on reading this article, seems to have got the impression that "Bob Easton" was a pseudonym for Kevin McClure. However, Jenny Randles has pointed out that both Bob Easton and Kevin McClure are mentioned in her book *Sky Crash*, so Bruni cannot have read it very carefully. It should be noted that Bob Easton is not to be confused with James Easton, who has conducted extensive investigations into the Rendlesham stories and documentation, but whose name is conspicuously and curiously absent from Bruni's book.

I hope you can make some sense of this; the Rendlesham business is far too complicated for your poor old Editor . . .

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